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ABSTRACT

This case study describes the separation distress experienced by Mei Mei, a 2-year-old Chinese-American female toddler at a midwestern university laboratory preschool. The toddler, who could not speak English, was undergoing the first substantial separation from her parents. The toddler was observed over a 9-week period, during which behaviors unique to separation response were recorded. Also recorded were events of dilingual discourse, a type of discourse in which speakers engage in parallel monologues and verbal communications are unintelligible for both parties. Anecdotal records and three videotapings served as the means for data collection. Data analysis revealed unique and complex patterns of social, emotional, and linguistic adjustment. Prolonged separation distress seemed to impede Mei Mei's linguistic adjustment. The child's inability to speak the language of her preschool culture proved to be one of the major barriers to overcoming separation distress. A list of 36 references is included. (RJC)

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Separation Distress of a Chinese-American Toddler at Preschool: A Case Study

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Abstract

This case study describes the separation distress of a Chinese-American toddler at preschool, discusses social development and sociolinguistic research relative to this case, and offers tentative interpretation of the results. While much of the social development literature has focused on children's school adjustment, most of the research has included samples of children from the majority culture. This naturalistic study reports an intensive nine weeks of a language-minority child's first substantial separation from home. Observation and data analysis suggest that unique patterns of social, emotional, and linguistic adjustment existed for this child. Reflections of this child's behavioral patterns and adjustment are explored. A conceptual framework including all the specific elements of the child's behaviors is appended.

Separation Distress of a Chinese-American Toddler at Preschool: A Case Study

During the first years of a child's life, the child-parent relationship is quite intimate. They share events that are unique to their relationship. Diapering and cuddling, for example, become tender moments when child and parent focus on one another. A toddler may take pleasure being close to Mom--sitting on her lap, examining her face, and being soothed by her voice. The young child will also display attachment behaviors such as smiling or crying that help maintain close proximity to and responsiveness from the parents. As a result, parents are continually challenged to understand and respond to their child's unique signals.

The quality of attachment, whether secure or insecure, is reflected in the nature of the child-parent relationship and ultimately in the child's subsequent social competence. The quality of attachment also affects how much autonomy the child will display, or how permeable invisible boundaries inherent in the child-parent relationship will be in the face of novel events. A secure attachment, for example, facilitates the child's ability to use the parents as a stable base from which to explore the environment and also as a refuge during times of distress. When frightened, two-year-olds cling to their parents with incredible strength, finding comfort in their verbal consolations. It is also during the child's second year, that attachment to the parents flourishes and the child-parent relationship benefits from the child's increased communicative skills. By three- or four-years-old, the child's cognitive and social abilities broaden and attachment becomes less intense (Maccoby, 1980, 1984).

Because the child-parent connection is intimate and somewhat exclusive to the outside world, their relationship is not an ordinary one. The child's attachment to the parents is deep and consequently can be a source of distress for the young child as well. For example, this distress is indicated by the separation anxiety children experience during brief periods of being

away from their parents. They exhibit specific preferences for their parents' presence and passionately protest separations. In this circumstance, separation anxiety is an attachment behavior that communicates children's distress and need for reunion with the parents.

Traditionally, researchers' efforts to understand attachment and separation responses have provided them useful insights into children's socioemotional needs during separation events. Consequently, the social development literature reflects what researchers identify as children's socioemotional reactions upon separation from their parents (i.e., separation anxiety). Research indicates that young children express separation anxiety by protest, despair, or denial. The mode of expression is contingent upon both the quality of attachment and length of separation from the parents (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978; Bowbly, 1969, 1973; Maccoby, 1980, 1984).

Most of this research has been conducted in experimental settings with children who speak English as the language of their general culture. For children and adults who fit these conditions, the research provides substantial, relevant advice. In contrast, very little research has documented the separation-adjustment plight of limited-English-speaking (LES) children, especially very young language-minority children.

As an early childhood educator, I found recommendations from the separation anxiety literature to be useful while assisting children during separation events. For example, distressed children found comfort in talking about the separation event, and at least could communicate their fears through a common language. Even though the preschool environment was novel and strange to some distressed children, I knew they would quickly adapt to the routine and rules of the school culture. Thus, the research provided me a personal framework to which separation anxiety could be applied, especially when distressed children were from the majority culture.

During the Fall of 1987, however, this personal framework quickly eroded and proved, at best, to be only partially relevant to the case of two-year-old Mei Mei. I initially met Mei Mei when I visited her home the week before she started school. While introducing me to Mei Mei, her mother informed me that the name Mei Mei meant "Little Sister" in Chinese. This nickname was used by those persons most familiar to Mei Mei. She invited me to use this name as she thought it would bring comfort to Mei Mei at preschool.

During the visit, Mei Mei's mother frequently talked to her in Chinese, saying that I would be her teacher. Mei Mei remained close to her mother as she watched me with curiosity. Although Mei Mei seemed content in her own environment, I wondered what her initial days at preschool would be like given her limited English ability.

Mei Mei's initial weeks at preschool were especially stressful and confusing for all participants. On the first day of preschool, Mei Mei screamed and sobbed for one-and-a-half hours, walking to the door crying out, "BU YAO! WO YAO ZHAO GE GE!" ("Don't want to!" "I want to look for big brother!"). On another day, a frightened Mei Mei asked me, "MAO JIN NE!?" ("Where's my blanket!?"). As her teacher I, too, was distressed. Her words were incomprehensible to me, and I was unable to meet her needs. Furthermore, I was not yet seen by her as a safe haven to which she could retreat. Because Mei Mei did not speak English, verbal consolation was no longer a useful strategy for me as comforter and educator. Consequently, the extent to which I could console Mei Mei with effective interventions rapidly diminished.

Because I was a participant affected by Mei Mei's unique separation event, I became interested in finding new ways to intervene with limited-English-speaking (LES) children's separation distress (or at least Mei Mei's!). By the end of her first week at preschool, I became her sole surrogate attachment figure at school. This closeness afforded me the opportunity to interact with her and closely observe her development. Over the course of 9 weeks, I kept a

chronological account of Mei Mei's social, emotional, and linguistic adjustment. It was on Mei Mei's first day of school that she and I began the initial journey of her first substantial separation from home.

What are the patterns of social, emotional, and linguistic adjustment of a limited-English-speaking toddler experiencing separation anxiety? Even though the social development literature provides a model for working with distressed children, it is conceivable that particular patterns of adjustment for a limited-English-speaking toddler exist.

In addition, does the absence of verbal communication create a major exception to the once useful separation-anxiety recommendations? Given that communication is a critical factor in soothing a distressed child, especially a young child, it would make sense that absence of communication would only exacerbate the problem!

Finally, in Mei Mei's case, was absence of communication the only major problem? Perhaps differing cultural norms for adult and child behavior and teacher anxiety and frustration were salient as well.

Literature Review

In the following literature review, research on social development, separation anxiety, and sociolinguistic competency is presented in order to highlight the role of effective communication in young children's healthy development. For example, much of the traditional social development literature reflects views of separation anxiety based on longstanding conceptions of attachment. These conventional views are elaborated in the studies of Bowlby (1969, 1973), Ainsworth (1978), and Maccoby (1980). They help form a theoretical foundation for further discussion of more *recent* research related to attachment and separation anxiety (e.g., Campos, Barrett, Lamb, Goldsmith, and Stenberg, 1983; Crockenberg, 1988; Thompson, 1988). Further, one major underlying principle common to both traditional and contemporary social

development literature is that of quality communication between parents and children.

The sociolinguistic literature also presented shows that communication can contribute greatly to ethnic minority children's social and linguistic adjustment in academic settings. Saville-Troike's (1985a) research on dilingual discourse, for example, reveals how LES children negotiate meaning with their English-speaking teachers in the absence of a common language.

Attachment and Separation Anxiety Literature

Traditionally, social scientists have investigated the concept of separation anxiety in the broader context of attachment and attachment behavior (e.g., Ainsworth et al., 1978 ; Bowlby 1969, 1973; Lamb, 1978; Maccoby, 1980). By studying children's behaviors, researchers have gained insight into how particular child behaviors help summon parental nurturance. Attachment behaviors such as cooing, crying, smiling, and clinging are the child's initial communicative strategies that serve to elicit parental attention.

Bowlby (1969, 1973) constructed an attachment model that included the attachment behavior of separation anxiety. He describes attachment as a biological, evolutionary process. That is, attachment originates as infantile helplessness wherein infants depend on parents to meet their basic needs. Because infants must depend on parents for meeting their basic needs, attachment becomes an underlying source of survival and security (Maccoby, 1980, 1984). When left alone, for instance, infants are vulnerable to physical harm. Consequently, they will seek close proximity specifically to their parents. Consider for a moment a child who becomes alarmed when separated from her parents. If the parents are unresponsive or inaccessible, the infant will cry out anxiously as though her life were threatened. Her crying signals the desire for reunion with her parents. Upon reunion with them, she will display positive behaviors such as clinging and smiling that reinforce her parents' response.

Separation anxiety, then, is not just an outcome of parental absence; the critical issue is the accessibility of that figure. Anxiety escalates when parents are unresponsive or unavailable. As infants mature, and cognitive skills help them become independent, separation responses are less intense and much shorter in duration.

Although Bowlby (1969) supports a behavioral emphasis, he also conceives attachment as influenced by cognitive development. He describes children's inner representations of attachment figures as working models or cognitive maps. For example, keepsakes such as blankets and photographs are symbolic links to attachment figures or the home environment. In the absence of the primary caregiver or when in unfamiliar environments, these keepsakes help alleviate children's distress. As cognitive representational models develop, children are more able to cope with periods of separation without excessive anxiety.

Although Bowlby limited his observations to children in institutions, residential nurseries, and foster homes, his research has both theoretical and practical implications. By observing children's separations and reunions with their parents, he found patterns of children's separation responses that included sequential phases of protest, despair, and detachment. For example, some children followed their parents to the door, crying and demanding to know where they were going. Often children threw themselves on the floor, resisting help from their caretakers. Some children coped with separation by emotionally detaching themselves from the event. Thus, Bowlby views children's separation behaviors as instinctive reactions to what they perceive as endless separations from their parents.

In contrast to Bowlby's biological-behavioral theory of attachment, Ainsworth et al. (1978) portray attachment as resulting from the fulfillment of social needs. Specifically, attachment is "...a relatively enduring emotional tie to a specific other person," (p. 53). Further, children often display overt, social signs of attachment such as seeking to be near their

parents, showing distress at separation from their parents, showing joy or relief upon reunion with their parents, orienting toward their parents even when not in close proximity to them (e.g., visually monitoring parents' whereabouts). Thus, attachment can fulfill both biological (physical) and social needs (Maccoby, 1980, 1984).

More Recent Views of Attachment and Separation

Earlier research on attachment and separation has enabled social scientists to better understand the role of attachment and separation anxiety in the child's development. However, in recent years researchers have expanded the attachment paradigm to include other viable factors such as child temperament, child-rearing styles, and nonmaternal care that influence the robustness of the child-parent relationship.

Fein and Fox (1988) argue that the lives of infants and parents are more complicated now than earlier days. For example, with little warning and no social planning, infant care has experienced a major transformation. In addition, conceptions of secure and insecure attachment are being redefined in order to account for changing needs of modern-day children (e.g., Belsky & Rovine, 1987; Campos et al., 1983; Crockenberg, 1988; Smith & Pederson, 1988; Sroufe, 1988; Thompson, 1988).

In the case of child temperament, findings by Belsky & Rovine (1987) suggest that infant temperament affects the manner in which security or insecurity is expressed rather than whether or not infants have secure or insecure attachments. Smith and Pederson (1988) on the other hand view maternal sensitivity and patterns of infant-mother attachment (child-rearing) as major determinants of whether or not infants develop secure attachments. Further, Sroufe (1988) points out that unresponsive caregiving is the primary factor for insecure attachment rather than whether or not parents are present.

Researchers are also considering the quality of the parent-child relationship during the

preschool years rather than solely focusing on the child's first year of life. In addition, researchers are acknowledging attachment and the manner in which it is expressed as situationally influenced and not just limited to effects of the parent-child relationship. For example, day care infants may display secure attachments to some caretakers, while at the same time show protest toward others. This research is critical in assisting caregivers in how they care for increasing numbers of young children. In nonparental care situations, then, the ontogeny of attachment may be modified so that children can adapt to the added pressures of changing familial relationships. Thus, educators must take another look at the attachment in the context of children's increasing separation from their parents and their developing nonparental attachments such as with teachers.

Attaching to Teacher and the Waning of Separation Fears

Much research indicates that very young children are often wary of strangers (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Bowlby, 1969, 1973; Hyson & Izard, 1985; Jacobson, 1980; Lamb, 1980; Maccoby, 1980, 1984). For example, the two-year-old fluctuates between accepting and rejecting comfort from an unfamiliar person. It can take days, even weeks, for the child to become accustomed to the new relationship and to form a substitute attachment to the caregiver. Duration of this conflict, or fluctuation, depends on the caregiver's skills in adapting her behavior in order to meet the needs of the distressed and wary child.

By two-and-a-half, children increasingly are willing to stay in the care of a person only known briefly; they are able to find some security in the presence of a substitute caregiver. At this time, children can trust someone other than the parents, and separation problems may be alleviated by the child developing an attachment to the caregiver. As the caregiver becomes more familiar and provides for the child's basic needs, the child will display preferences for that particular caregiver (e.g., maintaining close proximity, accepting comfort only from a

particular caregiver). With a growing sense of security, the child will also develop additional relationships with other caregivers and peers. New social relationships help the child develop a sense of autonomy, enabling her to increasingly play at greater distances from adults (Cohen & Tomlinson-Keasey, 1980). In addition, transition from home to school is facilitated by the child having a keepsake at school such as a blanket or teddybear (Gunnar, Senior, & Hartup, 1984; Jalongo, 1987).

Sociolinguistic Literature and the Young Child

An underlying principle in children's healthy attachments and social development is that of verbal communication. Usually, adults are responsible to aid children through times of unfamiliarity and uncertainty. Thus, adults' roles during these times include providing comfort and acting as communication partners who understand and act upon children's signals (e.g., needing to be held; seeking reassurance about the separation) (see Maccoby, 1980, 1984).

The second role, acting as a communication partner, is critical in fostering children's social and linguistic development. Because language develops largely in a social context, children not only acquire the language of their general culture but also they learn the rules of participation and interaction of their immediate community. As language acquisition increases, children are increasingly able to interact socially with peers and adults (Bruner, 1983; Cazden, 1981; Hymes, 1967; Kleifgen, 1986; Saville-Troike, 1985a, 1985b; Vygotsky, 1962; Wertsch, 1985).

Yet, what are the patterns of interaction when a child and other participants do not share the same language? Specifically, in this case study, a limited-English-speaking toddler experienced her first major transition from home to school, yet she could not use a common language as means for adapting to the demands of the separation event.

Saville-Troike's (1985a) research on dilingual discourse describes the problems and

strategies unique to speakers who do not share the common language (English). In the event of dilingual discourse, speakers engage in parallel monologues, leaving verbal communication mutually unintelligible. Consequently, speakers suddenly find themselves utilizing various nonverbal strategies in order to negotiate meaning. In most cases, dilingual discourse is a transitory stage for the non-native speaker in a new environment. For example, Saville-Troike's research at a university preschool shows that at the beginning of the school year, two Chinese brothers, Gege and Didi, frequently initiated verbal interactions with English-speaking peers and teachers despite the brothers' repeated and unsuccessful communicative attempts. Yet, if the brothers shared a common context with the English-speaking participants (e.g., observing an insect), then communication was achieved through object manipulation. Saville-Troike (1985a) illustrates an event of dilingual discourse with the following scenario between Gege [G], a four-year-old Chinese male and his teacher [T] (capitalizations are translations of Chinese):

G: AH. AH. SPIDER. SPIDER IS THERE.
(He points to something on the ground. The teacher leans over to look)
T: Did you see some bug?
G: IT ALMOST CAME IN.
T: Did you see a bug crawling along the sidewalk?
Wonder where it went.
G: HERE, HERE IS A HOLE.
IT'S GONE.
BEES ARE MUCH MORE SERIOUS.
ONE, THERE IS ONE.
THERE IS ONE KIND OF BEE.
IF YOU STEP ON IT, IT WILL STING.
T: (Listens attentively and nods)
G: YOU WILL HAVE A BEE STING WHICH WILL SWELL UP.
ALSO IT WILL.
T: (Nods)...
T: (Nods, and walks away from the area together with Gege) (pp. 5-6).

In this instance, the teacher hypothesized what Gege meant, and then made interpretations

based on the context. Not all verbal exchanges were this successful, however, even with the full advantage of the context. Often, speakers will derive divergent interpretations from the same event. In contrast to the previous example, the following example is an unsuccessful exchange where Ge Ge and his teacher shared the context but not the content:

(Gege holds out a cup of dirty water toward the teacher)
G: TEACHER, THIS WATER IS FOR TREES TO DRINK.
T: (Takes the water from Gege and pretends to drink it)
G: YOU ARE A TREE.
T: The Coke is mine.
G: TREES CANNOT TALK.
(Laughs)...
G: THIS CAN'T BE EATEN.
THIS MUST BE DUMPED.
STILL HAS MUD.
(Throws the water away) (Saville-Troike, 1985a, p. 8).

In addition to adult-child interactions, Saville-Troike (1985a) observed child-child interactions as well. However, child-child interactions between native and non-native speakers were less successful than teacher-child interactions. Teachers were not only more skilled in using nonverbal cues than were children, teachers were also more persistent in negotiating meaning with limited-English-proficient children. Nonetheless, successful child-child dilingual communication was evident in Saville-Troike's findings. Successful communication occurred because children were able to employ many nonverbal cues and props from which to interpret meaning. This is depicted in the following child-child interaction:

(Gege picks up a toy telephone)
G: HELLO. HELLO.
(Hands the phone to an English-speaking girl [H])
YOU COME TRY TO CALL.
THE PHONE IS RINGING.
H: (Picks up the phone and listens; hands it to Didi)
Answer.
What's the matter with the telephone?
D: (Takes the phone from the girl)
HELLO.

D: (to G), IT'S ABOUT TO GO THROUGH
TRY TO DIAL IT.
G: I'LL CALL AGAIN LATER.

Clearly, in the case of dilingual discourse, the majority of the responsibility for successful communication rests on the adult participants' use of nonverbal language and persistence in trying to interpret the meaning of the verbal exchange between native and non-native speakers. One critical factor in negotiating meaning is participants sharing the context.

Yet, even if participants share a common context, Kliefgen (1986) argues that general discourse remains very complex. Not only is discourse influenced by factors outside of the communicative event, but also it requires that speakers have sufficient metalinguistic awareness for interpreting both the context and content of the verbal interaction. For example, elements influencing whether communication is or is not successful include: Sociocultural components (e.g., values, beliefs); background knowledge (e.g., scripts); knowledge of classroom events, routines, and discourse structures; and surface linguistics and nonverbal codes.

In sum, the social and linguistic adjustment of language minority children can be very complex. At school, the emergence of a second language is often challenged by the social needs of the child. Furthermore, transitions from home to school can be even more trying when complicated with children's added separation fears. However, if young, language minority children can trust adults to act as communicative partners for them, then the transitions from home to school will be more successful when children are expected to contend with the novel demands of the school culture alone.

Research Questions

What are the patterns of social, emotional, and linguistic adjustment of a limited-English-speak'ng toddler experiencing separation anxiety? It is conceivable that particular patterns of adjustment for a limited-English-speaking toddler exist. In addition, does the absence of verbal communication create a major exception to the once useful separation-anxiety recommendations? Does the absence of communication exacerbate Mei Mei's separation responses?

Method

Procedure and Method of Data Collection

Qualitative research framed this case study of a Chinese-American female toddler in her preschool setting. To ensure ecological validity, no experimental treatment was conducted. Thus, only naturally occurring behaviors were recorded. In order to obtain a chronological account of the focal child's behaviors, anecdotal records served as the central means for data collection. That is, as significant behavior-changing events occurred, I took cryptic notes on three-by-five inch index cards, noting her social, emotional, and linguistic behavior and the time and date of each entry. These anecdotal records were kept in my apron pocket and fully elaborated upon each day after the preschool session. In particular, the duration of separation anxiety was recorded which included behaviors unique to the separation response (e.g., sobbing and sweating). I also noted events of dilingual discourse, phonologically, and obtained their interpretations with the assistance of two Chinese graduate students in early childhood education and a white undergraduate male who was bilingual in his native language English and Chinese (Mandarin). I then obtained assistance from the undergraduate male participant in order to transcribe, into Chinese, and also to translate into English critical words and phrases into an official phonetic system which is recognized by the government of Mainland China. Both the

words and phrases were added into my daily, elaborated anecdotal records.

Thus, for nine consecutive weeks, I served as participant-observer in the toddler program. In the nine weeks of observing and interacting with Mei Mei, I was able to collect 29 anecdotal records, commencing September 3rd and ending October 31st, 1987. I also co-taught with a full-time head teacher and therefore shared regular teaching responsibilities along with my role as a researcher. This closeness to the focal child, Mei Mei, allowed me to interact with her and closely observe her chronological development.

In addition, three separate videotapings supplemented the anecdotal records (September 16, October 20 and 27, 1987; totaling 120 minutes of raw data). I also enlisted the assistance of a Chinese early childhood education graduate student who helped me obtain accurate interpretations of Mei Mei's social and emotional behaviors and translations of her Chinese language from the videotape. Thus, the videotapes were viewed with the following goals in mind:

1. To obtain an accurate interpretation of the focal child's Chinese discourse in her attempts to negotiate meaning--known in this study as dilingual discourse,
2. To understand any Chinese cultural characteristics of behaviors according to social adjustment, separation anxiety, and communication,
3. To confirm my interpretations of social adjustment, separation anxiety, and dilingual discourse particularly about the focal child, and
4. To obtain an objective interpretation of teachers' communicative styles and strategies while assisting the focal child.

For both the anecdotal records and the videotapes the locus of observation and documentation was twofold. First, there was a dyadic relationship between the focal child, Mei Mei and me, her surrogate attachment figure. Second, there was a triadic relationship among the Mei Mei, her Chinese male playmate De De, and me.

Sample

A midwestern university laboratory preschool was the site of this case study where I also was a teacher in the toddler program. I initially met "Mei Mei," the focal child of this study, during a home visit. While I talked with her mother, Mei Mei watched me with curiosity and caution. She remained physically close to her mom and big brother (Ge Ge) throughout the one-hour visit. She was a two-year-old Chinese-American female whose native language was (Mandarin) Chinese. At home, her mother spoke Chinese with Mei Mei and English with me. Her mother tried to encourage Mei Mei to say "Hi" to me, but she never said a word--just watched.

Mei Mei's first day at school was quite stressful for all participants. She could not speak English, and therefore was experiencing her first substantial separation event from her parents. Consequently, because of my desire to help her and my curiosity to discover techniques to intervene under these special circumstances, Mei Mei became the focus of this case study.

Mei Mei seemed especially attached to her mother and older brother "Ge Ge" who was three years old. She came from an upper-middle-class family whose parents came to the United States from Taiwan seven years ago. Although her parents spoke English, Chinese (Mandarin) was the primary language spoken at home. Her father was employed at the university and Mei Mei spent a majority of time home with her mother who did not work outside of the home.

At school, however, she responded to simple requests by her English-speaking teachers such as "Would you hang up your apron?" and "You can brush your teeth now." This indicated to me that her receptive language exceeded her expressive language in English. If Mei Mei did attempt to communicate, she directed her Chinese verbalizations to me, the teacher to whom she first attached. These Chinese verbalizations occurred frequently every day. This fascinated me because she continually stared at me as though I would eventually respond in Chinese. It was

because of this ongoing parallel monologue between Mei Mei and me that I also began to collect data (in addition to the separation anxiety data) of an event called dilingual discourse (Saville-Troike, 1985a & b).

Mei Mei's two significant attachment figures at preschool were "De De", her Chinese male playmate, and me ,the participant-observer (teacher-researcher). De De played a key role in Mei Mei's adjustment, for he could talk to her and soothe her during stressful times. Often, De De would negotiate with his English-speaking teachers, in Chinese, for Mei Mei's needs. For example, videotape transcriptions reveal De De asking a teacher if Mei Mei could go outside.

Throughout data collection Mei Mei stayed especially close to me. That is she stayed close to my side, visually monitored me when apart from each other, and used me as home base from which to explore the environment. In addition, she seemed especially dependent on me to help her adept to the rules and routines of the preschool. Even though we did not speak the same language, nonverbal language quickly became our common means of communication (e.g., arm gestures and eye signals).

Developmentally, Mei Mei appeared to be healthy and alert. She was wary of unfamiliar people and novel events, however. Before participating in an activity, art for example, she watched the other children. Then, even if she engaged in an activity, she made sure both De De and I were next to her. An activity she participated in frequently was looking at books. Her two favorite books were Margaret Wise Brown's (1947) Good Night Moon and Don Freeman's (1968) Corduroy. Both books had simple storylines which she was able to follow easily. However, she preferred Good Night Moon, probably because it talked about items in the home and had a quieting effect.

Other Participants

When this case study originated, the toddler program had 16 children enrolled, eight

males and eight females. This included one black child, two Chinese-American children (Mei Mei and De De), and thirteen white children. By the conclusion of the case study one white male had left the program, leaving a total of 15 children. The children attended the toddler program four days a week, Tuesday through Friday, for two-and-a-half hours each morning (see Table 1).

The staff consisted of five experienced teachers (four white and one Philippino), three pre-service teachers (all white), and one volunteer (black). Mei Mei did not initiate contact with any of the staff except for the head teacher and me. She remained quite selective with whom she would participate.

The Toddler Program

The toddler program was housed in a mid-western university laboratory school. The physical setting was both spacious and open with learning centers designed and developed by the teachers according to children's interests. To reflect the program's philosophies, both indoor and outdoor environments were carefully planned and revised during daily and weekly staff meetings. Moreover, the physical design supported the educational and philosophical goals of the program. In addition, materials and activities were selected by the teachers to enhance the goals of both the indoor and outdoor curriculum.

The indoor learning centers included: fine motor/manipulatives, blocks, books, dramatic play, housekeeping, playdough, large motor, sensory, art, discovery/cognitive area, and two areas which served for group times. The outdoor environment included: a stationary climbing structure with a slide, a built-in sand box, and a porch area with planned activities such as a sensory pan, fine motor activities, playdough, large motor activities, and books. In addition, each child had a "cubby space" to keep belongings. The bathroom was equipped with child-sized toilets, sinks, towels, toothbrushes, and clothing bags-- all labeled with names and symbols for

each child.

The program schedule also supported teachers' educational goals and philosophies. It was carefully balanced by roles of participants, amount of activities and materials, and time (see Table 1)

Insert Table 1 about here

The curriculum was flexible and teachers planned weekly as the children's interests surfaced and evolved. The philosophy of the program was for children to be secure, healthy, and develop independent self-help and thinking abilities. The function of the teacher was to focus on children's proficiencies and provided a variety of stimulating activities according to individual developmental levels. For example, it was common to see teachers circulate around the room conversing with various individual children or small groups of children, playing alongside the children and expanding on their verbalizations. The children's roles were to select and initiate activities in the various learning centers and interact socially with their peers and teachers. Children were listened to and encouraged to share their ideas and interests with their teachers. It was also common to see a child ask for an activity *not* on the lesson plan, and then both teacher and child spontaneously setting up that activity.

Finally, some key attachment objects in the school environment helped to alleviate some of Mei Mei's separation distress. These included a blanket, which she brought to school every day; a pretend radio; scribblings by Mei Mei drawn at school; and Mei Mei's name tag (see Figure 1). The blanket was her most intimate belonging. She typically clung to or sucked on this 'part of home' every day at preschool. For instance, many events of dilingual discourse entailed Mei Mei asking "Where's blanket?" (MAO JIN NE?).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Method of Data Analysis

The unit of analysis was each anecdotal record, totaling 29 days of event sampling. These anecdotal records provided me a qualitative, ecological description of Mei Mei's adjustment. I was able to validate my interpretations of Mei Mei's behaviors not only by the social development literature, but also with the assistance of a Chinese graduate student in early childhood education and videotapings. Interestingly, by interacting with Mei Mei and viewing the videotapes, I was able to develop a chronological framework for interpreting Mei Mei's social, emotional, and linguistic development. In addition, a behavioral framework emerged as I combed through the raw data (see Appendix). This behavioral framework includes three main areas of behaviors: Social adjustment, separation anxiety and attachment behaviors, and negotiation of meaning (including dilingual discourse). In particular, both the type and intensity of separation anxiety were analyzed from the anecdotal records. That is, the type of separation anxiety analyzed included protest, despair, and denial/detachment (see Appendix, category IIA), and the intensity (duration) of separation anxiety included various degrees of distress, including substantial, moderate, mild, or no apparent separation anxiety (see Appendix, category IIB). Both the type and intensity of separation anxiety were validated by two experts in early childhood education with a 100 % agreement as to the operational definitions. Even though the literature referred to various intensities of separation anxiety (e.g., see Bowlby, 1969, 1973) and distress (e.g., see Ainsworth et al., 1978; Maccoby, 1980, 1984), I needed more precise descriptions of Mei Mei's separation responses.

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Results

It is the third week of preschool now. Mei Mei and a teacher are at the entry door of the classroom. Her mother left and Mei Mei is trying desperately to communicate with the teacher. She wanders around the entry way clinging to her blanket and crying.

Example 1

M: BU YAO!
'Don't want to!'
WO YAO ZHAO GE GE!
'I want to look for big brother!'
WO BU YAO!
'I don't want to!'
T: Mama will be back.
M: WO YAO ZHAO GE GE!
'I want to look for big brother!'
T: I know. It's O.K., Mama will be back (Day 8, 9-16-87).

Every day, Mei Mei, a Chinese female toddler has watched her mother walk out the entry door--and daily she has protested in despair by screaming, crying, and pulling away from every one in the classroom except for her Chinese friend, De De, and me.

Teachers' natural responses are to comfort her with words of assurance, which in most separation events would alleviate some of a child's separation anxiety. Yet, in this case, talking with Mei Mei is impossible--for no one at the center speaks Chinese except for De De. Furthermore, because Mei Mei does not speak the language of her preschool, she cannot verbally communicate with her English-speaking teachers.

Still, despite language barriers, the teachers try earnestly to communicate with her. Unfortunately tension builds as the English-speaking teachers try and communicate with this child. Consequently, Mei Mei's anxious separation

intensifies as she realizes her words do not assist her in a frightening and paralyzing event. At the peak of devastation, Mei Mei squats down and sobs, "WO YAO ZHAO GE GE! ("I want to look for my big brother!"). Sweating, she clings to her only source of solace--her blanket--and begs De De to help her find "big brother," who is next door. Once again she squats and cries out, "WO XIANG CHU QU!" ("I want to go out!").

Nearby, other children continue with their activities virtually unaffected; the language Mei Mei speaks does not strike a familiar tune to their ears, so they remain only alarmed by her crying. The teachers try endlessly to break the secret verbal code of interpreting Mei Mei's signals and body messages, but this is a slow, experiential process. Meanwhile, Mei Mei remains "unheard" because communication is a painstaking effort.

What do teachers do when a child is experiencing an intense separation and their words only seem to amplify the crisis? How different would this event have been if communication were a two-way channel of understanding between speakers?

As a participant-observer, I observed and contributed to the preschool community. Because I was a teacher in the toddler program, I was able to follow closely Mei Mei's adjustment. Consequently, I was also able to construct a chronological account of her social, emotional, and linguistic adjustment. From this chronological account, it became clear to me that Mei Mei, a non-native speaker, indeed experienced an intense separation event as well as demonstrated unique patterns of adjustment. Interestingly, patterns of behaviors occurred approximately every three weeks. Thus, I have chronologically described the results of Mei Mei's adjustment in three-week segments. Following is the account that evolved.

The First Three Weeks

The first three weeks were quite stressful for Mei Mei and the adults involved in her life. Most of Mei Mei's energies were spent waiting for her mother's return and just trying to make it through each school day. As her surrogate attachment figure at school, I found my strategies to help her rather insufficient. However, as time passed I developed an understanding of her unique needs despite our not sharing a common language.

Mei Mei's Social and Separation Adjustment

Before Mei Mei started school, her mother discussed Mei Mei's separation with me at their home. Mei Mei, who was standing very close to her mother and big brother, watched me with curiosity and reservation. Mei Mei's brother Ge Ge had experienced a distressful separation the previous year and her mother was concerned that Mei Mei would experience a similar event. In addition, she explained that Mei Mei was very wary of strangers. In order to prevent prolonged separation anxiety, I thought it would help if I shared the program's "drop-off" philosophy with her. I explained that it was the program's philosophy that parents quickly but gently depart after they help their child enter the classroom so that children would not receive mixed signals from their parents about the separation. Mei Mei's mother agreed and said she would help Mei Mei enter the classroom and then leave within 5-10 minutes after arrival. Mei Mei's mother was never indifferent to the separation. In fact, daily she inquired about Mei Mei's adjustment needs and almost always watched Mei Mei from the observation booth.

For about three weeks, her mother followed this drop-off strategy. Then, one particular day she had been in the observation booth and heard Mei Mei crying. Naturally she returned to comfort Mei Mei. Unfortunately, her mother's return only agitated Mei Mei's distress as Mei Mei protested: *"BU YAO! ("Don't want to!") WO BU YAO! ("I don't want to!")* (Day 8, 9-16-87).

Through the third week of school, Mei Mei was a socially inhibited child experiencing substantial separation anxiety as indicated by a segment of the following anecdotal record (see also, Appendix - IIA):

Example 2

> Mei Mei, De De, and I were in the book corner reading "Good Night Moon." Mei Mei sat next to me and watched all the other children. At 9:15 a.m., she released this very loud scream and the tears began to flow. She cried and screamed until 10:45 a.m. (1-1/2 hrs.). All the while, she would not allow any other teacher to come near her [except me]. She would shake her head and protest away from them [shaking her head 'no' and physically creating distance between herself and the perceived intruders] (Day 1, 9-3-87).

Also by the third week, Mei Mei had formed a strong preference to remain very close to me. It was very clear that I had become her surrogate attachment figure. Mei Mei trusted me to guide her and act as a mediator throughout the nine weeks of data collection. Frequently, Mei Mei visually monitored me in order to assure close proximity to me. Yet, even with her strong orientation toward me she would not accept physical reassurance from me (e.g., sitting on my lap or holding my hand).

When other teachers attempted to talk to Mei Mei, she would move closer to me or shake her head 'no.' It seemed as though teachers' attempts to interact with her posed a "threat" at this time. Only by the end of the third week did Mei Mei allow the head teacher to come near her. If teachers did not initiate interactions and simply continued with their responsibilities, no threat was posed and Mei Mei would not object to their presence. It was during these first few weeks that the teachers respectfully learned what Mei Mei's preferences and objections were. Because I was the only teacher who Mei Mei granted close proximity, I learned of her special needs and unique signals with much detail. It was the staff's belief that Mei Mei would begin to socially

interact when she began to trust the people and as the environment became familiar to her. Further, the toddler staff felt that Mei Mei's trust for others would naturally evolve from her trust in me.

Mei Mei's social interactions with other children were virtually non-existent at the third week. Yet, her behaviors were not always in opposition or in protest to them. She just spent the majority of her time observing other children instead of participating with them. If she did initiate play around other children, they were generous with their space and materials. However, she did not play near other children very often at this time Thus, the dilemma that remained was Mei Mei's developing a curiosity that was stronger than fear, enabling her to actively participate with other children.

Another dilemma was Mei Mei's learning the social rules of the preschool culture. Since preschool was her first substantial separating event, she had to learn the routines and values of the majority culture (e.g., being autonomous and independent; interacting freely with adults). Even though learning the rules and values of the preschool may be simple for some preschool children, Mei Mei had the added challenge of learning a second language. Consequently, a home-school mismatch occurred when Mei Mei had to contend with different norms for social, emotional, and linguistic competency (e.g., see Garcia, 1986; Heath, 1982, 1986; Philips, 1972, 1985). For example, the toddler staff valued children gaining independence and learning self-help skills. Teachers' ability to communicate these values to majority-culture parents and their children was not usually a problem because many values were mutual. Yet, in Mei Mei's case, her family did not strongly emphasize these primary values at home (independence and self-help). To illustrate, it was common to see Mei Mei's mother enter the classroom with her right by her mother's side. Then her mother would select an activity for Mei Mei. This particular adult-directedness was not consonant with the staff's philosophies, yet they did not

know what to do in this situation except allow Mei Mei's mother to continue.

Mei Mei and De De (Chinese friend) were quite attached by the third week of preschool. They channeled a lot of energy into maintaining close proximity with each other. De De was the leader of the two, however, and he often acted as a "correspondent" for Mei Mei during the day. For example, he would talk to her and lead her through transition times. Often, he seemed to be explaining to her what the teachers were saying or how to do certain activities. Moreover, he offered her empathy during her distress. Often, he invited her to an activity, or offered her a stuffed toy to soothe her. At times he would hold her hand or offer her *his* attachment object ("Pooh-Bear"). But most of all, De De's social-emotional availability and linguistic compatibility were meaningful contributions in alleviating Mei Mei's distress. Consequently, Mei Mei and De De were spending all their time together indoors and outdoors which also included sitting at the same snack table and participating in the same group time. Yet, teachers became concerned whether or not the Mei Mei- De De attachment contributed to Mei's Mei's social inhibition. However, they agreed that presence of a peer who was linguistically and culturally compatible would in fact assist in Mei Mei's long-term, healthy adjustment.

Mei Mei's primary means of communicating her distress was by angrily protesting the separation event with intense crying. Periodic screaming, resisting physical comfort from the teachers, and squatting down in despair were common patterns of behavior which demonstrated substantial separation anxiety. Added to this distress was her persistent signaling to leave through the entry and outside doors. During a particularly distressful day, videotape transcription reveals Mei Mei requesting to find "big brother"--Ge Ge--who was next door:

Example 3

> She kept saying something to me in Chinese. . . .Later, her mother [who had been observing] told me that Mei Mei wanted Ge Ge her big brother. . .I had assumed earlier that

she was asking for mother (Day 1, 9-3-87).

A few days later when Mei Mei continued to cry, I took her to visit her brother Ge Ge in the other classroom. Earlier that morning, her mother suggested I try this strategy. However, when Mei Mei and I entered Ge Ge's classroom her distress became more intense (Day 3, 9-8-87). He was involved in his own activities and was distracted by her crying. In fact, he ignored her for the majority of the visit. When he finally acknowledged her, Mei Mei cried harder. At this point, Ge Ge's class was gathering for group time. I then took Mei Mei out of his classroom and we watched Ge Ge from the door. Although she was tense, she let me hold her. Both the distancing and the watching somewhat soothed her. After Ge Ge's group time, Mei Mei and I went back in to visit him. She seemed calmer the second time we entered Ge Ge's classroom. Yet, when I told Mei Mei we had to go back to our room for group time, she cried intensely again. By now, I had been holding a tense Mei Mei and giving much attention to the crisis for approximately an hour. Upon returning to our room:

Example 4

> I decided that she had to go on with [other] responsibilities, and was curious what would happen if I. . .stopped holding Mei Mei. . . and calling 'attention' to the situation. After standing and following me, Mei Mei stopped crying after about 5 minutes [and did not cry for the remainder of that day's session] (Day 3, 9-8-87).

During these first three weeks, Mei Mei also demonstrated recurring indicators of distress such as sweating and sucking on her blanket. Hunger was an obvious factor of distress as well. Due to this stressful separation, she was not eating much breakfast at home during the first three weeks. At school, however, as snack time approached she developed an appetite and this contributed to her condition. At snack time, eating was a calming agent for her and consequently she began to relax and stopped crying.

Additional factors critical in alleviating Mei Mei's distress were selected attachment

objects. For the first two weeks, she clung to her blanket ("MAO JIN" as she called it), a pretend radio, and a picture of her name tag and symbol (a heart) which she had asked me to draw by pointing to her name tag and then back down to a piece of paper. I felt uncomfortable drawing a picture for Mei Mei because teacher-made artifacts were not a typical practice of the toddler staff. Yet, the first English words common to her and other participants at school were "Mei Mei" (her English name was on the name tag), and a "heart" (symbol) (see Figure 1). Further, I felt the teacher-constructed name tag-and-symbol-picture would served as an initial *link* for others to share some common language with Mei Mei. So, I drew her name and symbol as she watched my every move. The mutual sharing of these two words enabled Mei Mei to find comfort by understanding something familiar in a strange and threatening environment. By the fourth week, Mei Mei was carrying only the blanket with her at school.

By the end of the third week, a dramatic shift in Mei Mei's disposition revealed a child who was more willing to negotiate socially and linguistically with other participants at school. The quality of her separation anxiety abruptly changed from *substantial* to *no apparent separation anxiety* (see Appendix, IIB). Although Mei Mei appeared stoic, she was not detached from the separation. She often watched her mother walk away, and then demonstrated a readiness to enter into a new "phase" of adjustment.

One morning in particular, Mei Mei initiated exploration of various activities. As I followed her, she participated mostly in large motor activities (e.g., trampoline and climber) and a few fine motor activities (e.g., glue-art and legos). She also participated in parallel or cooperative play with De De indoors at this time (versus just observing). Outdoors, she remained an observer and only played on the climber. Often she would stand for several minutes watching others. Overall, however, she would not yet enter into other children's play nor would she allow other teachers to care for her. Compared to her parallel or cooperative play with De

De, her play around other children was mostly solitary or sometimes parallel. At times it seemed as though she didn't notice others around her. Only by now did Mei Mei allow the head teacher to interact with or be near her for up to ten minutes.

Reunions with her mother were consistently joyful and happy. When her mother arrived she would call out to Mei Mei and Mei Mei would say, "MA MA" and run into her arms. They embraced and exchanged kisses almost every day. Her mother would ask Mei Mei what she did at school. Her mother's interpretation of Mei Mei's comments upon reunion revealed this common reply: "I only cried a little." Mei Mei said this for the first four weeks of school, even one week beyond evidence of her crying.

Linguistic Adjustment

Compounding Mei Mei's distress was her inability to verbally communicate in an English-dominant classroom. The only member of the group who spoke Mei Mei's native language, Chinese, was De De. In the initial stages of her separation anxiety, De De's role was one of simply remaining close to her, offering her comforting items, and suggesting activities they could do together. It appears as though De De did not directly discuss Mei Mei's needing mom and big brother with her. Instead, he seemed focused on helping her in the immediate environment.

As mentioned earlier, teachers' verbal interactions with Mei Mei only added to her confusion and fear. Therefore, the teachers agreed to temporarily limit their verbal initiations with her. Interestingly, at this time, I discovered that singing to Mei Mei soothed her. Furthermore, at a staff meeting, I mentioned that nonverbal communication was more effective in helping Mei Mei understand my communicative intent and in soothing her. For example, at snack time, I pointed to the crackers and asked if she wanted some; and at toothbrushing time, I showed her a toothbrushing motion. Even though the teachers agreed to use more nonverbal

cues, they continued to interact verbally with Mei Mei. Teachers who were more experienced, academically and practically however, used nonverbal communication more often than did student teachers. Further, the more experienced teachers were more persistent in trying to communicate with Mei Mei using contextual cues such as holding up a book while pointing to the group time area when it was time for group.

Mei Mei's attempts to communicate were spoken only in Chinese. With stares of expectation, it seemed as though she felt her English-speaking teachers would eventually reply in Chinese. When they replied in English, she often looked confused, or just persisted by repeating herself in Chinese. Often, I wrote down a phonological interpretation of Mei Mei's words and asked her mother about these words at the end of the session. The following anecdotal excerpt illustrates Mei Mei's communicative attempts:

Example 5

> Throughout the day, she would attempt to negotiate meaning in Chinese by asking questions about [what seemed to be] things in the environment or [about] mom, or making statements. I assumed her requests. . .were in relation to wanting mom or Ge Ge, big brother. . . .She seems to think I can speak Chinese. She talks to me in Chinese waiting for me to respond. I have begun to look at the context for the exchange of meaning [in order] to understand Mei Mei's requests/attempts (Day 4, 9-9-87).

Mei Mei's attempts to communicate in Chinese occurred frequently every day for six weeks. Then, for about two weeks, these verbal attempts decreased and she relied more on non-verbal strategies, such as pointing or grunting. Then, Mei Mei began to engage in events of dilingual discourse again by the 9th week, the last week of data collection.

By the end of the third week, Mei Mei tried to help me understand her Chinese words with nonverbal cues. For example, taking my hand she pointed to the art easel and spoke in Chinese. When Mei Mei finished painting, she spoke something else in Chinese to me. The following

scenario depicts an event of dilingual discourse where I learned some of my first Chinese words:

Example 6

> [Mei Mei] got paint on her fingers, and said "XI SHOU" [wash hands]. I parroted. . . back. . . "XI SHOU" and Mei Mei said it again excitedly "XI SHOU" and [then] said "Yaw" nodding her head. She took my hand and led me to the bathroom where Mei Mei proceeded to wash her hands (9-17-87).

In the scenario above, language learning demonstrated to be a two-way adventure for Mei Mei and me. By the conclusion of the study, I was able to learn some key Chinese words such as: MAO JIN NE? ("Where's blanket?"), MA MA NE? ("Where's Ma Ma?"), DE DE NE? ("Where's DE DE?"), GE GE NE? ("Where's Ge Ge?"), HE SHUEI ("Drink of water"), XI SHOU ("Wash hands"), and BU YAO ("Don't want to"). Successful communicative exchanges between Mei Mei and me were a mutual effort. Mei Mei was using more nonverbal cues when she spoke, and I was now able to interpret key Chinese words by remembering previous contexts when she spoke these words.

Surprisingly, some of Mei Mei's older toddler peers began to notice a uniqueness about Mei Mei's speech. For example, Day 9 of the third week revealed English-speaking "Mari" noticing a linguistic difference when Mei Mei spoke. Mei Mei, De De, Mari, and I were eating a snack when the following exchange took place:

Example 7

> At snack Mei Mei was talking out loud in Chinese. . .Mari was imitating Mei Mei's speech. Mei Mei and De De would repeat their words in Chinese to Mari and the three would laugh! (9-17-87).

Further, by the fourth week, Mei Mei spoke her first audible English word, "playdough", and sang parts of the "ABC Song" at snack. When this happened, Mari inquired:

Example 8

> "Can she talk?" Mari [inquired]. I said, "Yes, she can. She likes the word playdough." From there, Mari and I sang the ABC song with Mei Mei [who had already begun singing it]. Mei Mei giggled when Mari sang with her (Day 13, 9-24-87).

On the same day, Mari "imitated" Mei Mei's speech. However, Mei Mei did not seem to realize that Mari was imitating her speech. Instead, only Mari revealed this metalinguistic awareness. At this point, I wondered if perhaps language learning for very young limited-English-speaking children and their English-speaking peers is a two-way adventure.

Fourth through Sixth Week

After a dramatic shift in separation anxiety at the end of the third week, Mei Mei slowly progressed socially and emotionally. Moreover, the initial signs of independence and initiative to enter into activities seemed to coincide with the cessation of separation anxiety by the fourth week. However, linguistically she demonstrated less progression. Rather, she seemed to watch other's actions and their mouths as they spoke.

Mei Mei's Social and Separation Adjustment

By the fourth through the sixth week, Mei Mei demonstrated no signs of separation anxiety. On one hand, she flowed more with the routine and did not show physiological signs of distress other than a strong appetite. On the other hand, however, she continued to bring her blanket daily and when she felt particularly "insecure" she clung to and sucked on it, which were signs of earlier behavior.

Mei Mei also became more actively involved in the preschool's activities by the fourth week. She was not spending as much time in observer behavior. Her participation remained parallel or cooperative with De De or parallel with a few selected children, and her attention to activities increased up to 20 minutes. Activities which Mei Mei showed a preference for

included those which offered fine motor manipulation such as sensory experiences, manipulatives, and housekeeping utensils. Her favorite large motor activities were climbing and jumping, both indoors and outdoors.

By the fourth week, she began to trust at least two other teachers; one being the head teacher and another one who changed her diapers. Further, Mei Mei began to physically distance herself from me, usually about 10-20 feet, but continued to visually monitor me. For example, one morning I was busy with other children and not available to greet Mei Mei when she arrived with her mother. Surprisingly, Mei Mei entered the room and initiated an activity without separation distress. Although she had began to participate somewhat in the activities, I could see her looking at me and then resuming her activity. Further, as Mei Mei was gaining independence from me, she remained quite attached to De De. She spent the majority of her time with him regardless of which one of them initiated an activity. Yet, by the fifth week (9-30-87), she seemed to want to become less dependent on De De. The following event occurred during outdoor play. Mei Mei had been following De De as they rode tricycles. Finally she decided to go 'her own way':

Example 9

> She pulled out in front of him and he was saying something [in Chinese] to her. She went on ahead of him. He got off his trike and went up and stopped her. . .She shook her head vigorously ['no'] and went on. . .[he seemed puzzled](Day 16).

The next day at school, Mei Mei displayed autonomy again and did most of the talking to De De. Although the research focus was not on De De, it was interesting to note that De De began demonstrating moderate separation anxiety at this time--a time when Mei Mei was becoming more autonomous. De De's crying did not seem to distress Mei Mei, nor did she attempt to comfort him as he had comforted her in the past. In fact, this fifth week revealed some more

progress in Mei Mei's social adjustment. For instance, De De ,Mei Mei and I were sitting on a rug in the manipulative area and De De began to cry. Mei Mei kept her focus on the other children around her while she imitated their play behaviors.

Mei Mei's desire to hold onto attachment objects also began to change by the fifth week. Although Mei Mei continued to closely monitor her blanket, she started 'letting go' by laying it down next to her or leaving it in consistent, visible places. Soon thereafter, the next phase of "letting go" occurred when she wanted me to carry her blanket around in my apron pocket. The head teacher was the next person with whom Mei Mei entrusted her blanket for short periods of time. Letting go of her blanket occurred mostly during outdoor play when she was most relaxed.

Mei Mei's reunions with her mother continued to be joyful and happy. They exchanged hugs and kisses as was the case during the first three weeks at preschool. Mei Mei had developed a sense of time (routine) for when her mother would arrive. Consequently, Mei Mei did not appear to be as preoccupied with her mother's return.

Mei Mei's Linguistic Adjustment

By the end of the fifth week, the majority of Mei Mei's attempts to communicate shifted from conversational discourse to requests regarding her immediate needs. With this shift came a period of silence. That is, although she was still engaging in dilingual discourse, her attempts to communicate became fewer and the duration of silence increased through the eighth week of data collection. For example, previous weeks' events of dilingual discourse were characteristic of Mei Mei talking indiscriminately in Chinese to me. By the fifth week, she was more silent and only initiating verbal communication with me when she needed something:

Example 10

> At snack, [dilingual discourse] with me were in the context of needs. One particular time, I was busy and not responding. . .[Mei Mei] finally shouted, "milk!" in English. (Day 16, 9-30-87).

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Even though Mei Mei shouted out this single word, she only maintained conversations with De De during this phase. She did not attempt *nonverbal* communication me as frequently as she had in the first four weeks. Nonverbal signals still evident at this time were pointing, nodding or shaking her head, and eye behavior (e.g., looking at an item she wanted).

Sixth through Ninth Week

Mei Mei's Social and Separation Adjustment

By the sixth week, Mei Mei was more comfortable with others around her and competently followed the preschool routine. In addition, she was understanding the rules for participation in the mainstream milieu. She relaxed even more and she did not monitor her blanket as intensely as a few weeks ago. However, she continued to have a strong appetite. From snack time on, her disposition increasingly became more positive.

Both spatial and temporal proximity to other children and teachers was increasing and she was more willing to spend more time next to them. Mei Mei often played next to another child also named De De, although they did not engage in cooperative play. By now, I was able to interact with other children and float around the room more freely. Mei Mei appeared to enjoy her newly gained independence and was benefiting from her attempts to engage in her favorite activities. Still, she continued to visually monitor me with this increased autonomy.

Mei Mei's dependence on De De fluctuated back-and-forth from follower to leader. Yet her attachment to De De seemed to remain quite strong. Attachment to her blanket fluctuated as well depending on the quality of the day (e.g., her disposition, change in staff, whether or not she was hungry or tired). During days of sustained attention with activities, she layed the blanket down for up to 30 minutes. Days when Mei Mei was more of an observer or experienced mild separation anxiety (such as during Week 9), she clung or sucked on her blanket as

characteristic of earlier days.

Data analysis of Week 8 reveals a morning which describes this increasing independence and initiative. Mei Mei sampled almost every activity, returning to those she preferred. Favored activities included: Q-Tip art, Ice Cream Scoops at the manipulative table, veterinarian at dramatic play, whipped cream in the sensory pan, and housekeeping. She was particularly adept at fine motor skills such as unwrapping bandages, gluing, and picking up tiny items with her little fingers. This was the most time she had been involved since she began preschool. My role was to either sit next to her or remain close by if she needed assurance. I knew her preferences by watching her eye signals or other obvious signs such as her taking my hand and leading me over to her play area.

Up until Week 5 (Day 18 of data collection) Mei Mei's adjustment to separation from home was increasingly stable. However, from the sixth to the eighth week, she demonstrated what appeared to be mild denial toward the separation (see Appendix - II-A). Just when it appeared as though Mei Mei was not acknowledging her mother's departing, by the ninth week, Mei Mei experienced mild separation anxiety. She began asking for mom more often (MA MA NE?), clinging to her blanket, observing, wandering, and sometimes whining something to me in Chinese. For example, one morning she was whimpering and wandering around. Naturally, I was concerned and tried to find out what Mei Mei needed by asking a series of questions:

Example 11

> I was with another child. She finally whined and said something to me. I said, "What? I don't know what your are saying." She said what I thought to be "SHOW--SHI-SHOW" and I said, "Do you want a drink of water?" She shook her head 'no.' I said, "Do you need to wash your hands?" She shook her head 'no.' So, finally I stuck my hand out and said, "Show me. I don't know what you are saying. Can you show me?" She took my hand, *holding on tightly* and led me all the way across the room to her cubby. By now, she looked tense. I never did know exactly what she wanted. . . . (Day 26, 10-27-87).

Even though I never found out what Mei Mei needed, we had developed a mutual pattern of going and 'finding out' together what she needed. In the instance above, I thought perhaps her distress may have been caused by a change in staff or an upcoming Halloween party. Further, in this example, she seemed to understand my English words more than in previous weeks.

For approximately six weeks Mei Mei had been gaining independence from me. Her attachment with me remained quite strong and she maintained a secure distance by visually monitering me if we were apart. Yet, there were two days of Mei Mei crying. Both times, she had lost visual contact of me for "too long" and seemed to panic. When this happened, Mei Mei either came and found me or the teachers brought her to me and her crying soon subsided. Day 29 revealed an example of this incidence:

Example 12

> Mei Mei. . .went on outside without me. . . .I was assisting children with coats. . . .[then] I could hear another teacher bringing a crying child to me. . . .the [other] teacher said Mei Mei had bumped her head a little outside and when she could not find me, it made her. . .cry. . . .Once with me, she cried for a little while. . . .[and then she stopped crying]. Outside, I entered into other activities with children as Mei Mei remained very close to my side. Once in a while, I stroked Mei Mei's hair. This seemed to help and she calmed down (10-30-87).

Even though the teachers could not understand what Mei Mei was saying, they inferred that she had become frightened when she could no longer find me.

Mei Mei's reunions with her mother continued to be enthusiastic. Mei Mei no longer mentioned her crying. Rather, their conversations shifted from the separation issue to the day's activities. Almost daily, I talked with Mei Mei's mother in order to maintain a trusting and open relationship among Mei Mei, her mother, and the program.

Mei Mei's Linguistic Adjustment

By the sixth week, during conversations with me and other English-speaking participants, Mei Mei was able to infer more meaning from contextual cues. Her schema for routines and rules of the classroom eased her challenge of "guessing" what others were saying. Also by this time, she had learned key English words such as paint, apron, and "It's group time" related to activities, materials, and transitions:

Example 13

> Mei Mei watched the other children paint. . . .I looked at her and said, "Do you want to paint?" She nodded her head with eye contact. . . .handed me her blanket. . . . She put a few strokes on the paper. . . .she took her apron off alone and I said, "You can hang your apron on the hook," (Day 20, 10-7-87).

Even though she experienced a period of silence from the sixth through the eighth week, her receptive language ability seemed to be active. Her ability to understand key words in English and common nonverbal signals, (i.e., motioning to put on her coat), allowed her to function more efficiently in an English-dominant classroom. Further, Mei Mei's receptive language acquisition allowed her more social and linguistic volubility with peers and teachers. A few times Mei Mei verbalized a Chinese word or two, but she did not engage in discourse.

Then, by the ninth week, almost abruptly Mei Mei engaged in events of dilingual discourse while trying to communicate with other teachers. She entered into a pattern of talking in Chinese to her English-speaking teachers and then waiting for their reply in Chinese. When they answered in English, Mei Mei almost looked surprised as if she was giving them a second chance to communicate with her in Chinese! This behavior is characteristic of those found in earlier data (first six weeks).

Discussion

As data analysis revealed, unique and complex patterns of social, emotional, and linguistic adjustment existed in the case of Mei Mei, a limited-English-speaking Chinese toddler. Moreover, her prolonged separation distress seemed to impede her social and linguistic adjustment.

Mei Mei's Social and Separation Adjustment

In the initial stages of assisting Mei Mei in her separation anxiety, teachers felt awkward and incompetent. Adding to this was fatigue and feelings of helplessness in both Mei Mei and her teachers. It might have been beneficial for Mei Mei to have had a familiar Chinese-speaking adult with her during her initial days at preschool. For example, this "mediator" could have communicated and interpreted for Mei Mei during her *initial* interactions such as during events of dilingual discourse. For example, in the early stages of her separation anxiety, Mei Mei continually asked, MAO JIN NE? (Where's blanket?). However, neither the teachers nor I knew what she needed. Perhaps if we would have had the assistance of an interpreter, we could have aided her distress more efficiently. Although De De was socially and linguistically compatible with Mei Mei and provided some comfort for her, he was not capable of adequately supporting her emotional or cognitive needs as could perhaps a Chinese adult. Even though her teachers did not have this type of assistance, they persisted in helping her become a part of the preschool culture. Furthermore, many effective strategies evolved through trial-and-error and subsequently seemed to come from the voice of common sense.

Mei Mei's adjustment would have been interesting to follow had she been placed in a mixed-age group with her older brother, Ge Ge. For example, in examples 3 and 4 of the anecdotal records, she was quite preoccupied with securing her brother's presence. Her distress

may have been exacerbated upon finding him in a different classroom which was also unfamiliar to her. Research by Bowlby (1969), Gunnar et al. (1984), and Cohen & Tomlinson-Keasey (1980) maintains that presence of a sibling, or familiar attachment figure, often alleviates separation anxiety and consequently increases play initiative.

Perhaps Mei Mei's mother should have been encouraged to stay a while with her for the first few weeks, helping her to understand the routine and helping me to learn about Mei Mei's needs more quickly. It seemed as though Mei Mei and her playmate De De were more dependent on their mother's direction. That is, it appeared as though their mothers initiated most of their interactions, held them a lot, and attended to their needs more often than did the mainstream culture mothers. With these parenting styles in mind, Mei Mei's social behavior became clearer to me.

During her first few weeks at preschool, Mei Mei seemed to find comfort in both my physical availability and emotional accessibility. In addition, more staff were secured for the toddler program in particular at the beginning of the school year. This enabled teachers to attend to separation problems more individually. In Mei Mei's case, prolonged separation distress demanded extra attention from me, her teacher. Mei Mei was also encouraged to bring an attachment object to school. She brought her blanket ("MAO JIN") which was her piece of home. It seems plausible that without this comforting item, her separation adjustment may have been more complex and enduring.

Data analysis revealed also that despite progression toward initiative and independence, Mei Mei continued to be socially inhibited for the duration of data collection--socially inhibited by the mainstream cultures' definition of inhibition that is. For example, some of Mei Mei's teachers viewed her as dependent and socially immature. However, when I closely investigated and talked with persons of the Chinese culture I discovered that close parent-child attachments

are encouraged. For example, parents often hold their children as well as initiate activities for them in public and at home (Chih Hsiu Ou, personal communication, November, 1987; Li, 1987; Wei Li, personal communication, November 15, 1987). Consequently, *once in a while*, it was helpful for Mei Mei to have a teacher begin an activity for her. Overall, Mei Mei's teachers allowed her to sample the activities at her own pace. As Mei Mei acquired mental scripts of the preschool subculture, we were certain that in time she would elect to participate. Eventually, she initiated social contacts and activities when she was ready; thereby progressing toward independence. As Mei Mei's independence emerged, her visual and physical monitering of me decreased. It helped Mei Mei when I allowed her to "break away" from me at her own pace.

Interestingly, when Mei Mei was with De De, her brother, and her mother, she was quite active. Her mother seemed to devote most of her time to both Mei Mei and her brother. Consequently, Mei Mei received a lot of individual attention. At preschool, however, she was placed in a wide, open and unfamiliar environment where many children's needs existed. In addition, she was very young and under these circumstances--having to contend with all these dramatic changes so early in life--perhaps she should have remained home for one more year.

Finally, it also may be possible that Mei Mei's temperament was a debilitating element in her social-emotional adjustment. That is, at the beginning of the study her mother described Mei Mei as being fearful of strangers, and perhaps this wariness compounded her distress (see Belsky & Rovine, 1987; Campos et al., 1983; Crockenberg, 1988 for further discussion on infant temperament).

Mei Mei's Linguistic Adjustment

One of the major barriers to Mei Mei's overcoming separation distress was her inability to speak the language of her preschool culture. Especially at the beginning of data collection, she did not exhibit expressive or receptive abilities of the English language. This compounded her

fears and demanded the patience and persistence of everyone involved when trying to understand her and meet her needs. Maccoby (1980, 1984) cautions that unfamiliar environments and linguistic differences contribute to separation anxiety.

As consistent with Saville-Troike's (1985a) findings, Mei Mei did engage in dilingual discourse and periods of silence, but not simultaneously. This intrigues me because I cannot tell whether or not her silence coincided with her developing metalinguistic awareness or that she became frustrated and simply ceased trying to communicate. Then after two weeks of silence, she engaged in dilingual discourse and she seemed more competent in her receptive language.

Simple gestures and nonverbal signals quickly became common codes of communication between Mei Mei and her teachers. Beyond these cues, teachers hypothesized and inferred meaning within the context. Thus, guessing the meaning of Mei Mei's utterances were necessary for initially understanding her communicative intent. In addition, *nonverbal* exchanges (e.g., eye behavior, pointing) with Mei Mei were most successful for all teachers (see Gumperz 1982; Saville-Troike 1985a, 1985b; Kleifgen 1986; Ochs 1979; Philips 1972, 1985 for further discussion regarding gestures, nonverbal language, and silence in communication).

In conclusion, there were abrupt changes in Mei Mei's behaviors at the third, sixth, and ninth weeks, especially in regard to separation anxiety. Changes in her behavior seemed to be affected by a multitude of factors--some of which I was unable to detect. Perhaps a change in staff or an upcoming holiday event fueled her separation response or contributed to seemingly sudden shifts in her behavior.

Although she remained quite socially inhibited with peers, she began to attempt interactions with at least three teachers by the end of data collection. Her attachments to De De, mom, her blanket ("MAO JIN"), and me remained strong for the duration of the study. Further, as Mei Mei became familiar with the physical environment, the rules for participation, and

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acquiring key English words, she advanced socially, emotionally, and linguistically.

Attempts to negotiate meaning in events of dilingual discourse were common. That is, Mei Mei indiscriminately used Chinese with English-speaking participants with whom she chose to communicate. Mei Mei did experience a silent phase from the sixth through the eighth week. She appeared to be observing others more closely as they spoke to her or among each other. At this time, a slight regression in her separation resolution seemed to occur as well. That is, by the end of the eighth week I observed Mei Mei's separation anxiety resurface along with events of dilingual discourse. Language learning was a two-way event for Mei Mei and me: Mei Mei receptively acquired the beginnings of a second language, English, and I attempted to learn key labels in Chinese.

Thus, a multitude of factors contributed to both the existence and the waning of separation fears for a child who did not share the common language of the mainstream culture. Further, careful examination of her social development revealed patterns of adjustment unique to a child from a minority culture.

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Appendix

A Conceptual Framework of Mei Mei's Behaviors

I. *Social Adjustment* defined as: meaningful factors of child's chronological social-emotional progress and development.

A. Crying
B. No Crying
C. Spatial proximity to playmate De De (spatial)
D. Spatial proximity to me (participant-observer)
E. Spatial proximity to other teachers
F. Spatial proximity to other children
G. Temporal proximity and interactions with De De
H. Temporal proximity and interactions with me (participant-observer)
I. Temporal proximity and interactions with other teachers
J. Temporal proximity and interactions with other children
K. Involvement in activities
L. Independence
M. Initiative
N. Waning of Attachment Objects (i.e., laying down blanket)
O. Visual Monitering (her substitute attachment figure)

II. *Separation Anxiety/Attachment Behaviors* defined as: Strong emotional behaviors aimed at securing close proximity to the attachment figure. Behaviors occur in differing types and intensities such as:

A. *Type of Separation Anxiety*
   1. Protest (resisting separation or comfort, kicking screaming, intense crying, displaying anger, wanting to leave)
   2. Despair (crying, sobbing, sadness)
   3. Denial (non-respondent when attachment figure leaves or returns, may display avoidance behavior especially when time to go home)

B. *Intensity of Separation Anxiety*
   1. Substantial (approximately 30 minutes to one-and-a-half hours of any one or a combination of the types of separation anxiety)
   2. Moderate (approximately 10-30 minutes of any one or a combination of the types of separation distress)
   3. Mild (approximately up to 10 minutes of any one or a combination of the types of separation anxiety)

4. No Apparent Separation Anxiety (no evidence of separation anxiety)

C. *Attachment* defined as the child's: social-emotional bonding with attachment figure(s); displaying trust in animate/inanimate figures; accepting or entering into spatial and temporal proximity with another person with frequency and duration
   1. Objects (blanket, art work, picture, pretend radio, music tape)
   2. Attachment to mother/father
   3. Attachment to Ge Ge
   4. Attachment to De De
   5. Attachment to me, participant-observer

D. *Reunion with Mother*
   1. Joyful, happy, positive
   2. Non-respondent, avoidant

E. *Physical Signs of Distress (other than crying, asking for mother, etc.)*
   1. Sweating
   2. Sucking on thumb
   3. Sucking on blanket
   4. Hunger

III. *Negotiation of Meaning* defined as: attempt to communicate with other persons, verbal, vocal and/or nonverbal.

A. Verbal
   1. Dilingual Discourse (parallel monologue between a non-native speaker and a native speaker. In this case, Mei Mei spoke Chinese in an English-dominant environment)
      a. Chinese Utterances
   2. Attempts to Speak English Words (i.e., milk, peanut butter)

B. Vocal
   1. Grunting (vocal sounds; no words verbalized)

C. Nonverbal
   1. Silence
   2. Signaling
      a. Pointing
      b. Eye Behavior (i.e., looking toward direction of door, blanket, particular food item)
      c. Head Movements (i.e., nodding, shaking head)
      d. Body Behavior (i.e., walking to door; hand on door knob; motioning to open door)
   3. Standing (no movement)
   4. Observing (may be moving)

TODDLER SCHEDULE: FALL

8:30- 9:45	Arrival of children Indoor choice activities (learning centers)
9:45-10:00	Clean up Group time (small)
10:00-10:30	Wash hands Snack Brush teeth, toileting
10:30-11:00	Outdoor play
11:00-	Departure of children
11:00-11:20	Postlab (daily staff meeting)
11:20-12:00	Clean up and set up for following day

Table 1. Morning toddler program: Fall schedule.

Figure 1. Mei Mei's name tag.